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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to extend the use of scoring rubrics presented by B. Moskal and others (2000) and to present examples of holistic rubrics that might be used against performance to the standards for the purpose of evaluating cross discipline student performance in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The Educational Testing Services (ETS) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) have prepared scoring rubrics for the assessment of second language acquisition. These rubrics are generally used as summative performance assessments or for the purpose of counseling students who are preparing for the Advanced Placement examinations. The rubrics are most helpful in combination with other assessments. A strength of the rubrics is that they do not encourage careless or sloppy performance. The ETS ACTFL scoring rubrics provides a single scoring scale that reflects the entire range of performance that it would be possible for a student to attain. With some adaptation, much of the rubric framework could be useful to teachers of subjects other than foreign language provided that teachers develop clearly articulated statements of what their students should demonstrate at each performance level. (SLD)

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Marie Miller-Whitehead

The use of scoring rubrics for performance assessment has become more widespread in both K-12 and higher education, with teams of educators developing rubrics appropriate for the assessment of individual student products or portfolios in a variety of subject areas (Moskal, 2000). Moskal provides examples of the process used to develop rubrics for the objective evaluation of college writing samples, the most common use of scoring rubrics. Moskal's example is of a four level holistic scoring rubric, with levels ranging from zero to three.

The present paper seeks to extend the rationale for the use of scoring rubrics presented by Moskal and others and to present examples of holistic rubrics that might be used against performance to the standards for the purpose of evaluating cross discipline student performance in reading, writing, listening and speaking. This approach has received considerable attention and study in the field of foreign language, ESL, and bilingual education, where students are expected to demonstrate acceptable proficiency in the four skill areas of reading, listening, speaking, and writing and are expected to be able to communicate effectively on a variety of personal and academic topics (Galindo, 1992; Lowe, 1982; Omaggio, 1986). This is considered a proficiency-oriented approach and encourages teachers to emphasize communicative activities in the classroom. Webster defines "proficient" as "having great knowledge and experience in a trade or profession...a thorough competence derived from training and practice...dexterity in execution and performance...mastery of technique...knowledge as well as technical skill." The proficiency-oriented approach also recognizes that meaning is dependent upon context and emphasizes communicative competence and the ability to negotiate meaning.

Familiarity with scoring rubrics commonly used in ESL and foreign language assessments becomes increasingly important as some schools serve increasing numbers of students who are Limited English Proficient or who are considered English Language Learners. While many of these students receive separate instruction in English as a Second Language, others do not and are mainstreamed into regular classrooms for all their subject matter instruction. Thus, while some subject matter teachers customarily coordinate with ESL or bilingual instructors, others are left to their own devices when making decisions about students whose native language is other than English. Thus, subject matter teachers who are familiar with the ETS ACTFL and FSI rubrics can use these as a common scale to make decisions about the achievement and progress of their students whose native language is other than English, knowing that these will be understandable to members of the professional language testing community.

Table 1 provides the scoring rubrics jointly developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language), and the FSI that are commonly used in combination to assess student performance in second language acquisition (Liskin-Gasparro, 1982; Lowe, 1982). A comparison of these rubrics with Moskal's rubrics for college writing shows some important differences, with the ETS ACTFL rubrics providing a synthesis of the holistic approach to accepted standards of performance for both product and process.

Insert Table 1 about here

The implications for cross disciplinary use of the rubrics should be apparent as the following examples will demonstrate. For example, to be considered a "Distinguished" level listener on the ETS ACTFL rubric, one is "able to understand all forms and styles of speech pertinent to personal, social, and professional needs tailored to different audiences." The distinguished listener "shows strong sensitivity to social and cultural references and aesthetic norms by processing language from within a cultural framework, including theater plays, screen productions, editorials, symposia, academic debates, public police statements, literary readings, and most jokes and puns, although the listener may have difficulty with some dialects and slang" (Omaggio, p. 438).

The "Superior" (level 4) speaker is allowed "sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal writing, but no patterns of error are evident...errors do not disturb the native speaker or interfere with communication" (Omaggio, p. 436). In this context the key differentiation between the superior performer and the native level performer is not so much the number of errors but the pattern of errors, a pattern indicating a gap either in knowledge of structure or inability to produce the structure while the well educated native is more likely to produce random errors.

The "Superior"(level 4) writer is able to:

> express self effectively in most formal and informal writing on practical, social, and professional topics. Can write most types of correspondence, such as memos as well as social and business letters, and short research papers and statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields. Good control of a full range of structures, spelling or nonalphabetic symbol production, ...a wide range of vocabulary that allow the writer to hypothesize and present arguments or points of view accurately and effectively. An underlying organization, such as chronological ordering, logical ordering, cause and effect, comparison, and thematic development is strongly evident...errors in writing rarely disturb natives or cause miscommunication (Omaggio, p. 442).

Moskal's rubric model describes a level 3 writing sample as "clear and concise, appropriate grammar throughout, easily followed, with effective transitions, professional format, use of graphics that are descriptive and clearly support the document's purpose" (p. 2). Notice that the rubrics provide a framework more reflective of standards to a process than to content, while the ETS ACTFL standards can be applied to content as well as to process. There are several limitations to the exclusive use of the ETS ACTFL rubrics in that they do not address the task specific standards to which the rubrics will be applied, but rather rely upon the use of established subject matter or curricular standards, expertise, and the evaluator's powers of discrimination in determining the specific skills that are exhibited at various levels of performance. Thus, the ETS ACTFL rubrics are generally used as summative performance assessments or for the purpose of counseling students who are preparing for the Advanced Placement exams, which are offered in both language and literature for foreign language students. As suggested by Galindo (1992) and others, the rubrics might be most helpful in combination with other assessments, or they might be used to evaluate student portfolios and used in conjunction with multiple choice test results.

A strength of these rubrics is that they do not encourage careless or sloppy performance, and

while they recognize the importance of conformity to the niceties of grammar, spelling, and syntax they do not emphasize mechanics to the exclusion of content, meaning, and creativity. The ETS ACTFL standards recognize the benchmark for highest level of proficiency is that demonstrated by the well-educated native, which serves to differentiate proficiency in formal communicative tasks on complex issues from conversational or colloquial skills on familiar, everyday topics. For comparison purposes Table 2 provides the rubrics used for rating student responses on grade 8 social studies essay questions (New York State Education Department). In this example, there are three scales, each with six levels of possible performance. A comparison of the description of the ETS ACTFL "Superior" writer (level 4) with that of a level 6 writer on the New York scale shows significant similarities. The Kentucky scoring guide for grade 8 mathematics, social studies, and science uses a five level rubric, ranging from zero to four. At level four, "the student completes all important components of the task and communicates ideas clearly; demonstrates in-depth understanding of the relevant concepts and/or processes; where appropriate chooses more efficient and/or sophisticated processes; where appropriate offers interpretations or extensions such as generalizations, applications or analogies" (Kentucky Department of Education).

Insert Table 2 about here

In conclusion, the ETS ACTFL scoring rubrics provide a single scoring scale that reflects the entire range of performance that it would be possible for a student to attain, from the very lowest level of functioning to the highest in a subject and can be used to measure student proficiency in listening, reading, writing, or speaking. Some students will attain equal levels of proficiency in all four skill areas, some will achieve level "4" in writing, but perhaps only a "2" in speaking, or a "4" in speaking but only a "2" in writing or reading and this may vary by academic topic; i.e., the student can ask questions and discuss chemistry but not social studies. A student of history, even a native speaker of English, might have high receptive (comprehension) reading and listening skills but less proficiency in speaking and writing effectively about history. The history teacher, faced with deciding what to assess when grading student writing (do grammar and mechanics count in a history essay?), might find the ETS ACTFL guidelines helpful in providing a balanced approach in assessing both form and content. The rubrics for Grade 8 Social Studies provided in Table 2 indicate that students would be assessed only on content and not on spelling, grammar, syntax, or other mechanics of writing. Thus, history or other subject area teachers who wish to encourage students to high levels of writing proficiency either must take a cross-disciplinary approach and team with an English teacher to assign the composition a grade for English usage, be forced to ignore gross errors of English usage in student compositions, or they may consider the use of the ETS ACTFL rubrics as a supplementary scale. While many high school subject area teachers customarily plan for writing across the curriculum and partner with an English teacher for some projects, this is not always convenient for one or both of the teachers; thus other measures may be useful to encourage students to achieve to high expectations for both content and form.

Beginning students of a second language who have had no previous exposure to the language are expected to progress and achieve higher levels of proficiency at different rates, depending upon ability, motivation, and practice. With some adaptation, much of the rubric framework could be useful to teachers of subjects other than foreign language provided that teachers develop clearly

articulated statements or examples that reflect their concept of what it means for their students to demonstrate "native" or "superior" listening, reading, writing, or speaking performance in the content areas, with the expectation that students should practice and demonstrate the full range of communicative skills in each subject area. The rubrics could also be applied to student performance to the written curriculum criteria for each subject area.

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Table 1

Government and Academic Language Proficiency Scoring Rubrics

Government (FSI)	Academic ACTFL ETS	Definition
	Native	Able to speak, write, read, listen at a level indistinguishable from that of an educated native speaker
5		
4+	Superior	Nearly equivalent to an educated native, communication is extensive, precise, appropriate to every occasion, with only occasional errors
4	(Distinguished)	
3+		
3		
2+	Advanced Plus	Errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker, only sporadic errors in basic structure
2	Advanced	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
1+	Intermediate - High	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands - understandable to native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners
1	Intermediate - Mid	
	Intermediate - Low	Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements
0+	Novice - High	Able to satisfy immediate needs with learned utterances
0	Novice - Mid	Able to operate in only a very limited capacity
	Novice - Low	Unable to function in the language (there may be evidence of comprehension)
	0	No ability whatsoever in the language; unintelligible

Table 2

Rubric for Rating Student Responses, Grade 8 Social Studies Essay

Scale	I: Use of Data	II: Plan of Organization	III. Development of Ideas
6	Always uses accurate and relevant data	Always demonstrates a logical and coherent plan or organization	Always develops ideas fully and clearly, using appropriate examples, reasons, details, explanations, and/or generalizations
5	Consistently uses accurate and relevant data	Consistently demonstrates a logical and coherent plan of organization	Consistently develops ideas fully, using appropriate examples, reasons, details, explanations, and/or generalizations
4	Uses mostly accurate and relevant data	Develops the assigned topics using a general plan of organization	Demonstrates satisfactory development and expression of ideas through the adequate use of support materials
3	Mixes mostly accurate and relevant data	Address the assigned topic, but demonstrates weakness in organization and may include digression	Demonstrates weakness in the development and expression of ideas with little use of support materials
2	Uses mostly inaccurate and irrelevant data	Attempts to develop the assigned topic but demonstrates a profound weakness in organization and may include several digressions	Demonstrates profound weakness in the development and expression of ideas, with little use of support materials
1	Uses almost no accurate or relevant data	Minimally addresses the assigned topic but lacks a plan of organization	Does not use support materials in the development or expression of ideas

Source: New York State Education Department